

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for threading a tape wound on a supply reel and provided with a coupling element at a free end thereof, said apparatus comprising:

a take-up reel;

a leader block adapted to establish a connection with said coupling element of said tape and assuming one of a connected state and an unconnected state;

a carriage transporting said leader block between a first position near said supply reel and a second position near said take-up reel through intermediate positions along a moving path;

a shaft rotatably connecting said leader block and said carriage; and

a holding element selectively ~~restraining~~ engageable with and disengageable from said shaft to restrain and ~~releasing~~ release rotation of said leader block with respect to said carriage depending on a state and/or a position of said leader block.

2. (original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said holding element restrains rotation of said leader block when said

leader block is positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions, and said holding element releases rotation of said leader block when said leader block is positioned in said first position.

3. (original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said holding element restrains rotation of said leader block when said leader block is in said unconnected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions, said holding element releases rotation of said leader block when said leader block is positioned in said first position, and said holding element releases rotation of said leader block when said leader block is in said connected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions.

4. (original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said holding element comprises a clamp selectively assuming one of a holding position and a releasing position, said clamp holds said shaft when said clamp is in said holding position, and said clamp releases said shaft when said clamp is in said releasing position.

5. (original) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein said clamp assumes said holding position when said leader block is positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions, and said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is positioned in said first position.

6. (original) The apparatus of Claim 5, wherein said clamp comprises a spring and a first tab, said spring biases said clamp toward said holding position, and said clamp moves from said holding position to said releasing position when said first tab is moved.

7. (original) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein said clamp assumes said holding position when said leader block is in said unconnected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions, said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is positioned in said first position, and said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is in said connected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions.

8. (original) The apparatus of Claim 7, wherein said clamp comprises a spring, a first tab and a second tab, said spring biases said clamp toward said holding position, said clamp moves from said holding position to said releasing position when said first tab is moved, and said second tab holds said clamp in said releasing position by contacting said coupling element of said tape when said leader block is in said connected state.

9. (original) The apparatus of Claim 8, wherein said second tab retains said coupling element of said tape.

10. (original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said holding element comprises a guide along said moving path receiving and guiding at least a portion of said leader block.

11. (original) The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein said coupling element comprises a pin, and said leader block has a groove adapted to receive said pin.

12. (currently amended) An apparatus for threading a tape wound on a supply reel and provided with a coupling element at a free end thereof, said apparatus comprising:

a take-up reel;

a leader block adapted to establish a connection with said coupling element of said tape and assuming one of a connected state and an unconnected state;

means for transporting said leader block between a first position near said supply reel and a second position near said take-up reel through intermediate positions along a moving path;

means for rotatably connecting said leader block and said means for transporting; and

means for selectively ~~restraining~~ engaging with and disengaging from said rotatable connecting means to restrain and ~~releasing~~ release rotation of said leader block with respect to said means for transporting depending on a state and/or a position of said leader block.

13. (currently amended) A data storage apparatus for threading a tape wound on a supply reel and provided with a coupling element at a free end thereof in order to execute a read

and/or a write operation on said tape, said data storage apparatus comprising:

a take-up reel;

a leader block adapted to establish a connection with said coupling element of said tape and assuming one of a connected state and an unconnected state;

a carriage transporting said leader block between a first position near said supply reel and a second position near said take-up reel through intermediate positions along a moving path;

a shaft rotatably connecting said leader block and said carriage; and

a holding element selectively ~~restraining~~ engageable with and disengageable from said shaft to restrain and releasing release rotation of said leader block with respect to said carriage depending on a state and/or a position of said leader block.

14. (new) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising:

a rotator turning said leader block;

a stopper provided with said rotator coming into contact with said first tab;

wherein said first tab holds said clamp in said releasing position, when said leader block is in said first position, by moving in contact with said stopper.

15. (new) The apparatus of Claim 12, wherein said means for selectively engaging and disengaging comprises a clamp selectively assuming one of a holding position and a releasing position; wherein said clamp holds said means for rotatably connecting when said clamp is in said holding position, and said clamp releases said means for rotatably connecting when said clamp is in said releasing position; wherein said clamp assumes said holding position when said leader block is in said unconnected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions, said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is positioned in said first position, and said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is in said connected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions; wherein said clamp comprises a spring, a first tab and a second tab, said spring biases said clamp toward said holding position, said clamp moves from said holding position to said releasing position when said first tab is moved, and said second tab holds said clamp in said releasing position by contacting said coupling element of said tape when said leader block is in said connected state; and wherein said device further comprises: a rotator turning said leader block; a stopper provided with said rotator coming into contact with said first tab; wherein said first tab holds said clamp in said releasing position, when said leader block is in said first position, by moving in contact with said stopper.

16. (new) The apparatus of Claim 13, wherein said holding element comprises a clamp selectively assuming one of a holding position and a releasing position; wherein said clamp holds said shaft when said clamp is in said holding position, and said clamp releases said shaft when said clamp is in said releasing position; wherein said clamp assumes said holding position when said leader block is in said unconnected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions, said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is positioned in said first position, and said clamp assumes said releasing position when said leader block is in said connected state and positioned in at least a part of said intermediate positions; wherein said clamp comprises a spring, a first tab and a second tab, said spring biases said clamp toward said holding position, said clamp moves from said holding position to said releasing position when said first tab is moved, and said second tab holds said clamp in said releasing position by contacting said coupling element of said tape when said leader block is in said connected state; and wherein said device further comprises: a rotator turning said leader block; a stopper provided with said rotator coming into contact with said first tab; wherein said first tab holds said clamp in said releasing position, when said leader block is in said first position, by moving in contact with said stopper.